

Police Captain Hears Signals Supposedly From Satellite

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Two Ham Operators Got 'Beeps' Last Night

Police Radio Capt. Darwin Covert says he listened this morning to what he believes were radio signals being transmitted from the Russian-launched artificial satellite.

Captain Covert, an Evansville radio amateur since 1931, said he heard short wave beeps on 20.005 kilocycles from 7:28 to 7:34 a.m. He said he was monitoring the frequency, one of two on which signals are being transmitted, at his home, 1100 Rosemarie-av.

He said he switched on his receiver at 7 a.m.

"At 7:28," he said, "I began hearing some faint beeps, supposedly from the satellite. They increased in volume until about 7:30 a.m., when I was reading them loud and clear. Then they faded slowly until I couldn't hear them anymore. They were gone by 7:34."

Possibly the first Evansville ham to tape record the beep-beep was 16-year-old Walter Heller, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry C. Heller, 764 Lombard-av.

Walter tape-recorded a signal he began hearing at 10:21 a.m. The signal became inaudible at 10:33, he said. Walter, a junior at Bosse, said he thought the signal was direct, rather than

"skip." He said he heard it on both frequencies — 20.005 and 40.002. This appears to verify the fact that the signal is from the satellite.

Walter also reported hearing the signal a second time, apparently after completing another circuit of the earth. The later signal became audible at 11:54 a.m., Walter said.

136 Per Minute

Captain Covert said he counted 136 beeps per minute, about two and one-quarter beeps per second. He said he believes he was hearing direct signals from the satellite equipment "because of the clean nature of the signals and steady build-up and decline in strength." (He explained that "bounce" waves — signals that bounce around the world between the earth's surface and a "metallic layer" known as the ionosphere—are normally wavering in nature.)

Covert said he concludes that the satellite was therefore closer to Evansville than at any time during that particular one hour and 35 minute trip around the world at a height of 558 miles.

Covert said he heard no "identifying transmission," no groups of character to identify the satellite.

Covert, who has been head of the police radio division during the last 15 years of his 19 on the force, said he was unable to hear the signals last night. He said he first tried about 10 p.m., but gave up after 30 minutes. He said he made his first effort shortly after learning the satellite had been launched.

Two More Successful

Two other Evansville hams, however, were more successful last night. They are Raymond G. Miller, 305 S. Parker-dr, and John Harkins, 1912 Haven-dr, who said they picked up the steady beep-beep between 10:15 p.m. and 11:10 p.m.

Miller said he first heard the signal at about 10:15. It lasted about 3-5 minutes, he said, before it faded out. Both Miller and Harkins reported hearing the beeps from 11:11:10 p.m. They said they believe they were monitoring the direct signal during the latter period.

There's a possibility the earlier beeps were "skip" or bounce signals, Harkins said.

Miller and Harkins say they don't believe they heard any iden-

tification transmission, although Miller said he thought for a while he might have heard "IGY" transmitted. That's the abbreviation for International Geophysical Year. (In international Morse code, used by most nations, IGY would be dit dit, dah dah dit, dah dit dah dah. However, it's believed Russia would record the letters in the Russian code, different from International Morse.)

Meantime, Dr. Ray T. Dufford, Evansville College physics department head, said today he is expecting to hear "momentarily" from Boston, Mass., headquarters for satellite observation. Dr. Dufford is in charge of an observation post atop the Engineering and Science Building. He said its 12 telescopes could be manned "on an emergency basis" by tonight, if necessary. However, he said it would probably be early next week before organized observations begin from there.

Minor modifications are to be made on each of the 12 six-power telescopes, to facilitate observation limited to a period commencing during observations, to be about two hours before sunrise and two hours after sunset, four "moonwatchers" will be at each

operation. Moonwatch observers at Terre Haute, said objects were sighted at 6:50 and 7:46 p.m. (Evansville time) Friday night. He ruled out the possibility that both sightings were the satellite.

Scientists at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in Cambridge, Mass., at first gave the Terre Haute group credit for the initial sighting and later said they doubted if anyone actually saw the satellite.

Dr. Fred L. Whipple, observatory director, said the sun obscures all view of the small globe except near the poles. In two or three weeks, he added, the satellite might change direction and be visible from the earth.

The Terre Haute Moonwatchers and others who claimed to have seen the satellite probably saw meteors or high flying aircraft, Whipple said.

Moonwatchers at Indianapolis, who already had a practice alert scheduled for Friday night before the Soviet Union announced the launching of the satellite, were unable to pick it up with their telescopes.

The third Moonwatch station in Indiana, in Evansville, does not yet have all its instruments set up.

Heard at Radio Station

Al Wessell, operator of amateur radio station W9HEX at Indianapolis, picked up a radio signal he thought came from the satellite. It was heard on a frequency of 20 megacycles before and after 11 p.m.

Don McKamay, who made the first sighting at Terre Haute, said he saw a steady white stream. Al Formickella, who made the second observation, described the object as a pale blue fluorescent

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Dr. Whipple said it would be impossible to see the baby moon during the day.

"You'd have to look right into the sun," he said.